

Poets

Meena Alexander
Judith Arcana
Jason Guriel

Steven Heighton
Ray Hsu
Tanis MacDonald

Yvonne Murphy
Alicia Ostriker
Russell Thornton

Priscila Uppal
Mark Yakich

Steven Heighton

A Perishable Art

I found my mother's footprints in the snow
still fresh, she'd passed this way only moments before.
Her tracks climbed and crossed the treeless hills at the skyline.
Her heels were halfmoon gouges in the white crust, glowing.

The prints held no warmth. Their shapes already changing.
Surprising how directly she had managed
to shear through that wandering terrain, as if
something unusual in the windempty range

of hills had captured her eye and drawn her on
with a purpose. And in fact all the signs there were
pointed to this—the long intervals between prints
suggesting haste, their unfaltering

evenness betraying a certain intensity, a certain
determination. I followed them some distance, saw nothing
but blue sky white hills and shadows between hills
and the prints themselves receding, as if by plan

clean as a survey trail or concession road. . . .
Before dark it grew windy. Powder snow
rippled like gauze curtains between hills, and quickly
filled in footprints—mine behind me

and my mother's before.

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